



THE OLD STONE HOUSE

# TOWN OF GUILFORD

31 Park Street  
GUILFORD, CONNECTICUT 06437

SETTLED IN 1639

## **Economic Development Commission Annual Report 2016-2017**

Stephen Kops, Chair until June 2016, stepped down from Commission when term ended, November 2016.

Mark Wasserman – Chair, effective June 2016.

Ted Sands, Vice Chair.

Jennifer Cowie – stepped down when term ended November 2016.

Robert CuoZZO

Mark White

Fran Paranto

Damian Gunningsmith

Robert Levine – resigned from Commission October 2016, moved from the area.

Michael Meisel – new October 2016.

Michael Orce – new October 2016.

Leonard Prygoda – new December 2016.

David Egan – new April 2017.

Michael DeMeo – new April 2017.

Brian McGlone – Economic Development Coordinator, Town Staff Representative

Edward Lazarus – Shoreline Chamber of Commerce President, Liaison

Kathy DeBurra – Recording Secretary

The Economic Development Commission is charged to conduct research into the economic conditions and trends in the Town and to make recommendations to appropriate Town officials and agencies regarding action to improve the Town's economic condition and development. The Commission may advertise, prepare, print and distribute books, maps, charts and pamphlets which will further its official purposes.

## **Annual Report**

## **Guilford's Economic Development Commission accomplished the following in 2016-2017:**

Several significant projects were approved or began during this period and many are now becoming a reality. All of these projects will support the grand list. Renovations and construction continued with The Residences at 66 High Street. The "historic Mill Building" began selling units late 2Q2016. The first new building, The Whitfield, was under construction with the grand opening in June 2017, featuring the model unit and several other units. Two additional new buildings are approved on the site, with construction expected to begin during the first half of 2018 on the next building, The Leete building. This project is gaining widespread attention throughout the state and New England, winning numerous awards for the renovation and preservation of the historic Mill Building along with the creation of the new buildings on this in-town site (transit oriented development, walkable to downtown, train station and other town amenities). Construction began on the Patriot Center in July 2016, with the first tenant, CT Gastroenterology occupying a significant portion of the first building. Three buildings are approved on the site, two at 20K sf each, with a third at 16K sf on the rear of the site which is under construction. Oceanco acquired the former Stonehouse Restaurant and converted it to research office space which opened in July 2016. Pa's Place opened as a small restaurant on this site, replacing the former "Little Stone House Restaurant". U-Haul has been working out of the former Mannix Auto Dealership site for several years with the intention of purchasing the site. They have been working through our processes and approvals for about 1 year with the intention of renovating the existing building to support retail and storage operations and build a new, 48K sf building to house storage units. Assuming all approvals are obtained, construction will begin in 2018. A plan for 38 "cottage condos" was developed for 350 Goose Lane. However, the plan was not approved by the Inland Wetlands Commission and thus was dropped. A previously approved plan for commercial office buildings was resurrected. The existing front building of 4.5K sf was renovated and a local business, The Stone Agency, moved into this space. Construction is underway for the first new building, a 16K sf structure, with occupancy expected during 2018. Construction on the second new building of 24K sf is expected to begin later in 2018. Construction has also been underway at; The Mews, a 14 unit residential condominium development (former Guilford Tavern site), Guilford House, adding 19 units for assisted living care, and at Gatehouse West, 5 upscale condominium units.

Many businesses started during this period. New restaurants included; Carson's on Whitfield, Kamana Fine Indian and Thai Sweet Treats. Unfortunately, D'Vine Bistro was only active for about one year before they closed their doors. Several service businesses opened including; Southern CT Gas Company, Wave Gas and Convenience Store and Heritage Collision. Recreational and athletic businesses opened including; Shoreline Ballet and Batter Up! Retail stores opened including; ONYX and Whitfield Design LLC. The Kitchen Store closed during this period as did Distinctions Hair Studio and Day Spa. Viso Bello by the Shore, a day spa, opened where Distinctions (and Rituals) were located. Opportunities for additional retailers and/or food service providers exist within the Guilford Commons shopping center. No additional businesses have been added to the initial 9 stores during the past year. Guilford Commons however, is still our single largest real estate taxpayer in town.

Interest and activity continues around town. The diverse examples above confirm the desirability of Guilford as a place to live, work, shop and dine.

### **Administrative, Organizational, & Professional Development**

Continued to enhance Town website with featured commercial properties inventory and additional demographic information.

Members attended economic development related seminars. Incorporated subject matter experts into EDC meetings to expand knowledge base of commission members. Industry focus included; hospitality, biotech and realtors.

### **Events**

In collaboration with the Shoreline Chamber of Commerce, participated in numerous New Member “Ribbon Cuttings”, Business-After-Hours Networking, and Tourism initiatives. Supported local events like; Taste of the Shoreline, Chowder Challenge, Sidewalk Sale Days, Wellness Fair and the Annual Tree Lighting. And, participated in the Shoreline Non-Profit Workshop Series (Fall 2016 & Spring 2017) sponsored by the Chamber and Guilford Savings Bank.

Initiated our first “Business Recognition Program”, based on milestones/years of service in Guilford, using 5 year intervals as the benchmark. First breakfast event held at the Guilford Community Center in March 2017. Businesses recognized included; Food Works Natural Market (25 yrs), Christopher’s Day Salon & Spa, Guilford Financial Group, Palumbo’s Automotive (30 yrs), Breakwater Books (45 yrs), Guilford Art Center (50 yrs), Guilford Craft Expo, SARAH Organization (60 yrs), and Guilford Keeping Society (70 yrs). This will become an annual event.

Planning began in the fall of 2016 for the Guilford Performing Arts Festival (GPAF). A working committee was formed in March 2017 to implement the 4 day event in October 2017. Nearly 50 events occurred over the 4 days in 17 venues, attended by 4,000+ people. Many businesses reported a strong influx of business during the GPAF.

### **Community Outreach**

Expanded scope of information and ease of use of website for residents and prospective businesses.

Continued to inform public on EDC initiatives via, Guilford Events magazine, Facebook, E-Newsletters, press releases, and the town website.

Continued tourism initiatives as a way of bringing additional people to Guilford to support our local businesses. State Tourism office toured Guilford for a day to better understand all Guilford has to offer prospective tourists. We held a workshop with these state representatives and with local businesses so that the businesses could take advantage of the State Tourism website, obtaining free position and listings. We are working with the State Film office, updating Guilford pictures and attractions as possible locations for films and commercials. During the past year, Honda filmed a commercial at Jacob’s Beach and Thule shot pictures for advertising at Trolley Road Beach. We are

working with State DOT representatives to enhance signage on Rt. 95 and off the major exits in an effort to attract more tourists to historic Guilford.

### **Regional Outreach**

In collaboration with our local state representatives, the Shoreline Chamber and Branford EDC, organized, implemented, and participated in a Legislative Summit at the Stony Creek Brewery (Dec 2016). Over 135 businesses were represented, stating their concerns with CT as a place for doing business. Tough issues like regulation, taxes and budgets were discussed, providing this group with input as they do their work in Hartford.

Guilford continues as an active member of REX. We utilized REX data and resources as we researched an Extended Stay Hotel as a possibility for Guilford. We discussed with several developers but decided that Guilford is an unlikely location for such a facility. In conjunction with REX and Workforce Alliance, work fairs have occurred to support Guilford Commons employment. Several local businesses have worked with Workforce Alliance to find certain skilled labor. REX continues to promote Guilford with tourism initiatives and represents Guilford at local and national trade shows and events.

In collaboration with Branford, Madison and State representatives, we continued to explore bringing low cost Gigabit Ethernet to our towns. Axia, a Canadian firm presented an option that did not require major capital investments in infrastructure by the towns. As we were determining the feasibility to this approach, Axia changed their USA model and withdrew their proposal.

### **Interaction with Town Boards, Commissions, and Departments**

Serious interest was shown by a developer to bring the Guilford Village West project to life. GVW is an approved 115 unit housing development, located across the street from Guilford Commons. During the process, EDC worked with Planning & Zoning to eliminate the 55 year old (and above) restriction. This restriction limited potential buyers and impacted the developers' ability to obtain project financing. In spite of these changes to zoning, the developer dropped the project from consideration due to funding issues.

EDC proposed revisions to Zoning Regulation 273-47, allowing merchant's additional time for the use of outdoor displays to promote their respective businesses. Following a 1 year trial period, new regulations were drafted and approved (Q4 2016) allowing merchant's year round display of outside merchandise. The EDC Commission and the local businesses feel this will benefit their businesses and our community.

In collaboration with the Town Planner, Town Attorney, and Board of Selectmen, developed a RFQ/RFP for a town owned parcel near the Yacht Club referred to as Pages Lane. Pages Lane was identified in the Town Center South Plan as a potential waste disposal area, supporting the surrounding area for redevelopment. The BoS established a Pages Lane Committee to review and make recommendations based on the responses to the RFQ/RFP. Although two submittals were received, they didn't meet the requirements of the RFQ/RFP and were rejected. This concept will likely be reviewed in the future as interest in redevelopment of several surrounding sites remains strong.

Submitted by Mark Wasserman and Brian McGlone December 18, 2017